

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Memo For 25 max  
Gen. Secant

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24 March 1975

**FACT SHEET**

**SUBJECT:** Feasibility of the RVN Conducting an Air and/or  
Surface Offensive Mining Campaign Against Haiphong (S)

**BACKGROUND:**

1. The RVNAF was provided a potential for conducting limited mining operations. Mining training of RVNAF personnel took place on Guam by US personnel and was completed on 15 February 1974. The program trained the following: VNAF ordnance personnel to receive, handle, store, prepare and arm the MK-36 DST. Additionally, appropriate publications and manuals were made available to the VNAF. It is estimated that the RVNAF obtained an operational status, less weapons, to conduct limited mining operations as of 1 June 1974.

2. The VNAF Joint General Staff was advised that the actual support of RVNAF mining operations, through the provision of destructors, would be predicated upon flagrant DRV/PRG ceasefire violations. Under these conditions, and upon recommendation by CINCPAC, authorization to provide the destructors to the GVN would be considered by the JCS.

3. The January Paris Cease Fire Agreement and the June Joint Communique prohibits the introduction of troops, military advisors, and military personnel, including technical military personnel, into South Vietnam; however, the periodic replacement of armaments, munitions, and war materiel may be authorized through designated points of entry and is subject to supervision.

4. Adequate number of MK-36 DSTs and MK-52 mines are pre-positioned in Subic Bay, Philippines, in the event a decision is made to provide the weapons to the GVN.

**CURRENT STATUS**

5. It is estimated that, since the mining training was completed over 13 months ago, ordnance personnel are probably no longer qualified to prepare and arm the MK-36 DST. However, due to the simplicity in delivery of the MK-36 DST, VNAF pilots could, with proper training, satisfactorily deliver the weapon. Therefore, US personnel would be required to support the VNAF in preparing and arming the weapons for use.

6. The only combat aircraft in the VNAF inventory that could air deliver a mine/DST in Haiphong is the A-1 and F-5. Currently all VNAF A-1 aircraft

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As per instructions on document

BY

Date

1 Jul

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SUBJECT TO GENERAL DECLASSIFICATION  
SCHEDULE OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652  
AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO  
YEAR INTERVALS  
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Activity report of 23 March 1975, about 50 A-1 aircraft in storage are being activated and made combat ready. Estimated completion is not known at this time. Transport aircraft, such as the C-130, could air deliver MK-36 DSTs on pallets, however, the success of a mission of this nature is not known. (TAB A).

7. The VNN possess ships capable of conducting mine laying operations (after minor modification to the ships) against Haiphong. (TAB B).

8. If the RVNAF were provided with mines to be used against Haiphong Harbor in the near future, US personnel would be required to prepare and arm the mines prior to loading aboard VNAF aircraft or VNN ships. The MK-36 DST is the recommended air delivered mine and the MK-52 either air or surface delivered. (TAB C).

9. Haiphong Harbor is defended by Coastal Defense sites, Coastal Surveillance Radars, AAA regiments, SAM sites and cruise missiles. The early warning net coupled with large numbers of North Vietnamese surface vessels in the Gulf of Tonkin, could preclude the movement of ships and aircraft through that area undetected. (TAB D).

#### CONSIDERATIONS

10. Although the RVNAF could possibly mine Haiphong Harbor to some degree, the capability to sustain a mining campaign to effectively curtail the use of the port of Haiphong is doubtful.

11. The surveillance, early warning and defensive network in North Vietnam make an undetected approach to Haiphong by air or surface extremely difficult.

12. A combined air and surface mining effort by South Vietnam would give the greatest potential of successfully mining Haiphong Harbor and provide a mix of MK-36 DSTs and MK-52 mines which would complicate the minesweeping effort of the North Vietnamese.

13. The mining of Haiphong Harbor by South Vietnamese could pose a psychological impact on the North Vietnamese and produce a morale boost for the South Vietnamese.

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14. The failure of an attempted mining effort against Haiphong Harbor could produce a psychological boost for the North Vietnamese and impact on the South Vietnamese morale.

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TAB A - VNAF Aerial Mining  
B - VNN Surface Mining  
C - Target and Weapons  
D - North Vietnam Defense

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TAB A

VNAF AERIAL MINING

1. Background.

a. VNAF Aircraft:

(1) The VNAF have two combat aircraft capable of carrying and delivering mines and destructors, the A-1 and F-5.

(2) C-130 aircraft has the potential of being modified to deliver MK-36 DSTs by dropping the weapons on pallets from the rear hatch of the aircraft.

(3) The optimum SVN operating base to mine Haiphong is DaNang Air Base.

b. Aircraft Loading and Ranges:

(1) The A-1 can carry 14 MK-36 DSTs, or 2 MK-52 mines and 12 MK-36 DSTs. Fuel considerations require one external fuel tank to mine Haiphong from DaNang.

(2) The F-5 can carry 2 MK-36 DSTs with 3 external fuel tanks and reach Haiphong from DaNang.

(3) The C-130 would be limited by gross weight and configuration of pallets that would permit arming wire extraction after release from the aircraft. The C-130 could carry 5 108 X 96 inch pallets with an 8500 pound load limit per pallet. Based on load limit only, 17 MK-36 DSTs could be carried on each pallet.

(4) The F-5 aircraft could be utilized providing CAP over Haiphong for the A-1 and or C-130 aircraft.

2. VNAF Limitations

a. The weapon carrying capacity of the F-5 aircraft would require excessive sorties to emplant sufficient MK-36 DSTs in the Haiphong ship channel to restrict ship movement.

b. The slow speed to enemy fire.

c. Potential high loss rate of aircraft and pilots in the mining of Haiphong would limit future use of air in defense of SVN.

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d. To satisfactorily implant a mine in the Haiphong main ship channel requires accurate navigation. VNAF pilots have not been trained in over water navigation and over water flight would be required to reach Haiphong.

e. Due to the accuracy requirements and navigation limitations of VNAF aircraft, mining missions would achieve optimum results during day VFR conditions.

f. Penetration of the Air Defense System of the DRV by the A-1 and C-130 would be most difficult, as neither aircraft has a satisfactory defense against enemy fighter aircraft nor do they possess a warning system or electronic warfare capability against SAM's or AAA.

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TAB B

VNN SURFACE MINING

1. Background.

a. VNN Ships:

(1) The VNN has three types of ships that are capable of carrying and could be modified to deliver mines. The ships are former US Destroyer Escorts, Patrol Craft and Weather ships.

(2) The VNN ships could be modified to deliver the MK-52 mine.

(3) The VNN possesses the potential to navigate these ships to Haiphong Harbor.

(4) VNN crews could be trained in minimum time to lay MK-52 mines.

2. VNN Limitations

a. VNN ships have limited self-defense capabilities against enemy air attacks and coastal defense sites.

b. The speed of the ships probably would preclude an undetected approach to Haiphong.

c. Without proper training of VNN personnel in the handling, preparing and arming of the MK-52 mine, US personnel would be required to prepare and arm the mines prior to use.

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TAB C

TARGET AND WEAPONS

1. Target Considerations.

a. Haiphong Harbor:

(1) Successful mining of Haiphong would close to shipping a major DRV port.

(2) The mining of Haiphong to any degree could have a psychological impact on the North Vietnamese.

(3) The mining of Haiphong could have a psychological boost for the South Vietnamese.

(4) Based upon the US experience, the successful mining of Haiphong would require a major campaign that includes air interdiction as well as mining.

(5) Overland delivery of material to, and within, the DRV, and off-loading of cargo at coastal anchorages (such as Hon La and Hon Nieu) would reduce the effectiveness of the mining.

2. MK-52 Mine.

a. The mine is effective against large ships as well as small craft.

b. Maximum depth range allows usage in deep water.

c. Use of pressure combinations increases the DRV mine countermeasures problems.

d. The A-1 is the only VNAF aircraft capable of delivering the MK-52 mine.

e. It would require about six months to train RVN personnel in weapon storage, assembly, preparation, and the loading of mines. Therefore, mines would have to be transferred to the RVN in Class A. No Objection To Declassification in Full 2011/04/28 : LOC-HAK-243-3-4-4 would require the reintroduction of qualified US personnel to assist the RVN.

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3. MK-36.

- a. The MK-36 DST is a modified MK-82 500 pound bomb.
- b. Use of the DST MK-36 Mod 3 would provide a mine threat to boats which were not motor propelled but which had magnetic construction or cargo.
- c. Use of the DST MK-36 Mod 4 would provide a mine threat to motor propelled craft with magnetic construction or cargo, and also would complicate the DRV mine countermeasures problems.
- d. Aircrews and groundcrews are familiar with the MK-82 bomb.
- e. DSTs could be used on land and in water up to depths of 70 feet.
- f. A minimum amount of training would be required in order to have RVN personnel become current in the use of DST.
- g. The DRV has the ability to sweep DST MK-36 as a result of experience gained in conducting mine countermeasures operation in the DRV inland waterways in conjunction with END SWEEP operations.
- g. DSTs do not have an adequate damage radius against 10,000 ton merchant ships in water deeper than 70 feet.

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TAB D

NORTH VIETNAM DEFENSE

1. Coastal Defense.

- a. There are 23 Coastal Defense sites that are capable of defending Haiphong. It is estimated that 3 to 10 sites are on alert.
- b. Coastal Defense sites are equipped with 122 and 133 MM guns.
- c. The Coastal Defense site on the Do Son Peninsula has an active cruise missile facility with an effective range of 23 miles against surface targets. This site covers the entire approach to Haiphong Harbor.
- d. Surface targets have been tracked out as far as 125 NM.

2. Air Defense.

- a. NVN Early Warning coverage extends to about 200 NM into the Gulf of Tonkin.
- b. There are 5 AAA Regiments in the Haiphong Harbor area with a total of about 300 weapons.
- c. There are an estimated 8 SA-2 sites in the Haiphong area.
- d. There are an estimated 250 MIG 17/19/21 aircraft in North Vietnam.

3. Mine Sweeping.

- a. The North Vietnamese were trained by US Forces during End Sweep to sweep the MK-36 DST, and possess US minesweeping equipment.

c. The North Vietnamese possess a limited capability to sweep MK-52 mines from experience gained when the PRC swept the Haiphong channel in January 1973.

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- d. The North Vietnamese recently acquired at least one mine-sweeper from the Soviet Union.

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